

## The Start of Whale Rider – Our Paragraphs (with a bit of editing from Mr Haig)

### Character - Koro

The start of the film introduces the audience to the character Koro. We learn about how traditional Koro is, and his troubled relationship with Paikea. We learn about the importance of tradition to Koro from how he chants the karakia over his dead grandson, and also from how he wears the whale tooth, the rei puta, which is a symbol of leadership. We also learn about his relationship with Paikea, particularly from the voice over that Paikea delivers. She says that Koro did not love her, “There was no gladness when I was born,” she says. Also her tone of voice over the haunting music sounds lonely and sad as she describes Koro’s desire for a male grandson.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Genre and Setting

The start of the film introduces the audience to the genre and setting of film. The music and sound is low and sad throughout the opening scenes, and shows the audience that this film will be a drama that involves emotion. The music suits the dramatic opening shots of the sequence. Also the sound, in terms of the voiceover, lets the audience know the setting in time and the ‘mythology’ behind the setting, which is so important to the film. The underwater shots of the whales at the start of the film which are very dark and slow, contrasted with the shots of the birth show the connection between the characters and the whales, which seem to represent the traditional connection to nature that the tribe had.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Character - Koro

The start of the film introduces the audience to the characters, giving you some important ideas about them. You learn a lot about Koro, and how he is very traditional. He shows this through his concern for having a male grandson. This is shown in several shots, such as when he asks Porourangi, “Where’s the boy,” and when he is chanting over the dead grandson and ignoring the cries of his living granddaughter. We also see how stubborn he is, from when he does not want to hold Paikea.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Genre

The start of the film introduces the audience to the genre of the film. It shows us that this is a family drama, by introducing the conflicts between characters who are clearly members of a family. Paikea’s voiceover in the opening scenes states that she was not wanted by her grandfather, and explains how a family tradition had been broken by the death of her twin brother, thus setting the scene for conflict within the family.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Conflict – Koro and the family

The start of the film introduces the audience to the conflict between Koro and the rest of his family. We see the conflict between Porourangi and his father with the birth of the baby girl, Paikea, and how the main focus of Koro is for Porourangi to, “start again,” so he can, “get his boy.” This makes Porourangi angry, and he leaves, shrugging his shoulders in frustration at his father. Porourangi also angers his father by naming the baby girl Paikea, as his dying wife wished. This name was traditionally only given to the male descendants.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Character – Nanny Flowers

The start of the film introduces the audience to the character of Nanny Flowers. She is shown as a nice, caring grandmother. Koro, her husband, is quite stuck-up and rude about his daughter-in-law dying, telling his son to, “start again,” totally ignoring the death and his new baby-grand-daughter. Nanny Flowers, in contrast, carries her granddaughter around, we see her several times in a two shot clasping Paikea to her chest, and caring for her when she cries. She talks to Paikea, and tells her that Koro is “mean” and an “old Paka.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### Plot and themes – The legend of Paikea

The start of the film introduces the audience to the family traditions, and the legend of Paikea. It does this through the voice-over of Paikea, while on the screen there are slow, dimly lit shots of a whale swimming majestically through the ocean. This shows that the legend of the whale rider is still significant for the family, and by starting with this it tells the audience that the whales and the legend will play a significant role in terms of themes and plot in this film.